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## BULLETIN OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

### MEMBERSHIP

IN the last number of the BULLETIN, an appeal was made to the members of the Museum to help the Trustees in their efforts to increase the membership, and, thereby, add to the power of the Museum to carry on its work. Some of the members have generously responded to this request. It is with the thought that others, who may not have seen the first notice, may be willing to send in the names of possible candidates when the matter is brought to their attention, that this second appeal is made.

In the October issue it was pointed out that the only income available for administration expenses is the money received from admission fees and the sale of catalogues, handbooks, and photographs; what the City provides in its annual Budget appropriation; and what is given by the Trustees.

The work of the Museum is constantly enlarging, not only as regards accessions of objects of art, together with their installation and exhibition, but in direct educational work, such as coöperation with the public schools, art schools, and practical workers, manufacturers, and designers, and the giving of lectures and personal instruction.

The Museum seeks to impress upon the public the diversified ways in which its collections should be useful to the community. It tries to keep constantly in view the principle fundamental with all museums, that these institutions are of practical benefit to the people for recreation and instruction.

It is to carry on such work as this that the Trustees invite an increase of membership, and thereby, an increase in power to work.

### LECTURES, 1915-16

For Members of the Museum. Six illustrated lectures on The Italian Painters as Decorators. Miss Edith R. Abbot, Museum Instructor. Class Room. Fridays, 11 A. M., beginning January 7th.

For Children of Members. Four illustrated lectures. The Museum Instructors. Lecture Hall. The following Saturday mornings—January 8, 22, February 5, 19—11 A. M.

For Teachers, and for others on request. Six illustrated lectures on Italian Painting and Sculpture of the Renaissance. Miss Edith R. Abbot, Museum Instructor. Class Room. Wednesdays, 4 P. M., beginning October 13th.

For Teachers, and for others on request. Five illustrated lectures on The Painting of the Northern Schools. Miss Edith R. Abbot, Museum Instructor. Class Room. Tuesdays, 4:15 P. M., beginning March 14th.

For Students in Art Schools of New York City. Five lectures. Cecilia Beaux, William M. Chase, Robert Henri, Bryson Burroughs, and Philip Hale. Museum Galleries. Saturdays in January and February, 8 P. M. Tickets will be required, and may be secured for single lectures or for the course, before December 10th, on application at the office of the art school attended.

For Salespeople, Buyers, and Designers. Four illustrated lectures. Lecture Hall. Saturdays in February, 8 P. M.

For the Blind. Two lectures illustrated with objects from the collections which may be handled. Class Room. Saturdays, 8 P. M., April 15th and 29th.

For the Deaf. Two illustrated lectures. Miss Jane B. Walker. Class Room. Thursdays, December 2nd and February 3rd, at 4 P. M.

For Students of History in the City High Schools. Mrs. Agnes L. Vaughan, Gisela M. A. Richter, Stella Rubinstein, Christian Gauss, and Frank J. Mather, Jr. Lecture Hall. Wednesdays, 4 P. M., beginning December 1st.

### AN ALTARPIECE BY BENOZZO GOZZOLI

FOUR panels originally forming a small altarpiece or retable, by Benozzo Gozzoli, have been lately acquired and are now shown in the Room of Recent Accessions. They were painted for the chapel of the Alessandri family in the church of San Pier Maggiore in Florence and remained in that place until a portion of the building collapsed in 1784 and the church was con-

sequently abandoned, when they were removed to the palace of the Alessandri in the neighboring Borgo degli Albizzi. Here they stayed until the time of their purchase by the Museum.

A number of misstatements in relation to these pictures have been made by writers on art; the first of these was due to Vasari, who with excusable and not infrequent inaccuracy of attribution ascribed them to Pesello. In the lives of Pesello and Francesco Peselli<sup>1</sup> he mentions our panels in these words, "In San Pier Maggiore in the chapel of the Alessandri he [Pesello] made four story pictures [storiette] of small figures of S. Peter, S. Paul, S. Zenobius when he resuscitated the little son of the widow, and S. Benedict." Vasari, therefore, was responsible for the attribution to Pesello, which was unquestioned until 1864, when Crowe and Cavalcaselle first indicated the real author. "Another predella (mentioned by Vasari in the lives of the Peselli)," they write, "originally in San Pier Maggiore but now in the Casa Alessandri at Florence, representing four scenes from the legend of Saint Benedict and other saints, has been too much injured and repainted to justify a decided opinion. The remains would suggest however a hand and method different from the foregoing and more akin to those of Benozzo Gozzoli."<sup>2</sup>

The most cursory examination of the pictures shows the mistake the authors make in their statement of the condition of the paintings. Not only are they not "much injured and repainted," but they are in an unusually good state of preservation for works of this time. Repaints and small damages there are certainly, but these are remarkably few in number and with rare exceptions in unimportant and inconspicuous places. The reference to these works as a predella is also inaccurate, as their size would preclude this possibility. Vasari, as has been pointed out, does not speak of them as such, but as four "storiette."

<sup>1</sup>Vasari's *Lives*, edited by Gaetano Milanesi, vol. III, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>Crowe and Cavalcaselle, *New History of Painting in Italy*, 1864, vol. II, p. 365.

The tentative attribution to Benozzo Gozzoli has since been accepted as fact. It is amply confirmed by their relationship to similar acknowledged works of the same epoch, notably to the predella panels of the altarpiece of San Marco, the principal part of which is now in the National Gallery. The panels of this predella have been recognized by Mr. Herbert Horne<sup>3</sup> in paintings in the British Royal Collection, in the Brera in Milan, and in the Johnson Collection in Philadelphia. These bear close analogy in subject, composition, and details of form to our works, and fix the year of their painting approximately as 1461, the known date of the altarpiece of San Marco. Our panels may be assigned to the time between the commission for this altarpiece and the beginning of the frescoes at Sant' Agostino in San Gimignano in 1463. The chapel in San Pier Maggiore for which they were painted was endowed by Costanza, the widow of Bartolommeo Alessandri, in 1464, and the altar and paintings were evidently in place at the time of the endowment, when the chapel was opened for service. It was the time in Benozzo's career when his work was most charming and characteristic.

The altarpiece was dismembered, probably at the time of its removal to the Casa Alessandri, and there is no record of the relative disposition of the parts. Following their order as set down by Vasari, we will first consider the panel which he refers to as a story of Saint Peter.<sup>4</sup> It represents the fall of Simon Magus, a powerful enchanter who claimed to be God. As is told in the Golden Legend, he was worsted in dispute with Saint Peter in Jerusalem and fled to Rome, where he became a favorite of Nero. Saint Peter and Saint Paul followed him to Rome and "discovered all his enchantments and malefices" to Nero. There was a long feud between them, and at the end, as the Legend relates, "Simon Magus assembled the people and showed to them how he had been angered of the Galileans, and therefore he said that he would leave the city which he was wont to defend and keep, and set a day in which

<sup>3</sup>Burlington Magazine, vol. VII, p. 377.

<sup>4</sup>Panel: H. 15 $\frac{1}{8}$  in.; W. 17 $\frac{1}{8}$  in.

he would ascend into heaven, for he deigned no more to dwell in the earth. Then on the day that he had stablished, like as he had said, he went up to an high tower, which was on the capitol, and there being crowned with laurel, threw himself out from place to place, and began to fly in the air. Then said S. Paul to S. Peter: It appertaineth to me to pray, and to thee for to command. Then said Nero: This man is very God, and ye be two traitors. Then said S. Peter to S. Paul: Paul, brother, lift up thine head and see how Simon flyeth. Then S. Paul said to S. Peter when he saw him fly so high: Peter, why tarriest thou? perform that thou hast begun, God now calleth us. Then said Peter: I charge and conjure you angels of Sathanas, which bear him in the air, by the name of our Lord Jesu Christ, that ye bear ne sustain him no more, but let him fall to the earth. And anon they let him fall to the ground and brake his neck and head, and he died there forthwith. And when Nero heard say that Simon was dead, and that he had lost such a man, he was sorrowful."<sup>1</sup>

This is the moment of the picture. The holy men are at the left, Saint Paul praying and Saint Peter standing with his hand raised and looking at Simon Magus as he is borne in the air by devils. The "high tower" of the Legend, here a scaffolding, is shown beneath him. The saint's commands take effect and Simon falls to earth. His bleeding body flat on the ground, face down, is in the foreground. Nero sits on a throne at the right. His likeness, which is taken from some Roman coin or bust, shows his characteristic features. A councilor and soldiers are beside him, while back of the saints is the populace in lively attitudes of astonishment. One of the magician's adherents in the crowd weeps, with his sleeve to his face.

The panel of Saint Paul<sup>2</sup> shows his conversion, as it is told in the ninth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where it is related that Paul, the intolerant persecutor, received permission from the high priest to

search out the Christians in Damascus and bring them bound to Jerusalem. When he was nearing Damascus, he was struck by a light from heaven and a voice said to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" The scene of the picture is a hilly country with trees and houses such as one finds in the neighborhood of Florence. Paul is prostrate on the ground, and from the right hand of Christ, who appears encircled by cherubs in the sky, a ray of light strikes him in the eyes; for the account says he was blind for three days. His companions rush in terror from the place and the startled horses curvet and rear. The confusion of the moment is admirably rendered, and certain of the attitudes, notably that of the horse and rider back of Paul's head, are keenly observed. The little yelping dog running beside the soldier at the left gives the touch of familiarity in which Benozzo delighted.

The fascinating picture of Saint Zenobius<sup>3</sup> comes next. Its story is soon told. A child of five years, the only son of a widowed mother, was crushed by a passing wagon in a street near the cathedral. The mother implored the help of Saint Zenobius, by whose prayers the child was brought to life. Benozzo has arranged his picture in this manner: the body of the child is on a rug between the kneeling figures of the mother at the right and the saint in his episcopal robes at the left. In the fashion of the narrative pictures of the time (an example of which occurs in the panel of Simon Magus, where Simon is shown uplifted by the devils and again after he has fallen to the ground), the resuscitated child is seen standing back of his own dead body, joining his hands in thankfulness to the saint. An acolyte bearing a cross stands nearby and the onlookers range themselves in two groups toward the sides of the picture. The miracle takes place in a street of Florence and the costumes of the bystanders are those of Benozzo's fellow-townsmen.

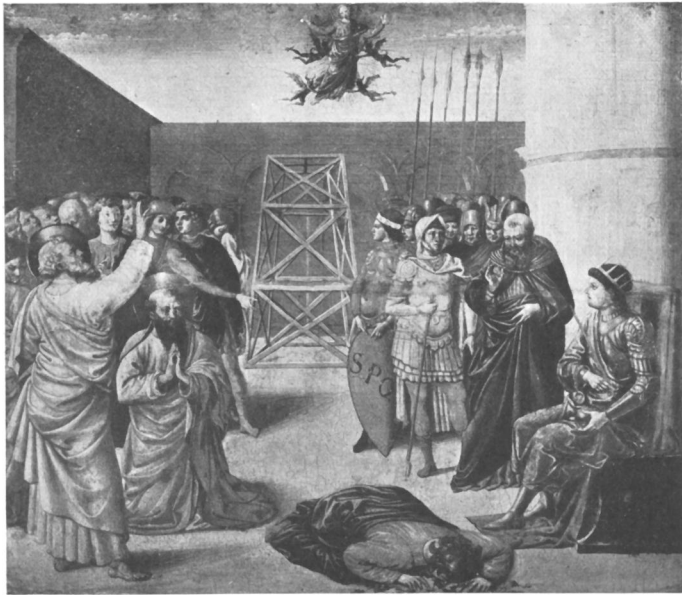
The Saint Benedict<sup>4</sup> panel has to do with the meeting of Totila with the saint, as related by Saint Gregory and retold by But-

<sup>1</sup>Golden Legend, vol. IV, pp 14-20 (Temple Classics).

<sup>2</sup>Panel: H. 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.; W. 18 in.

<sup>3</sup>Panel: H. 15 $\frac{1}{4}$ in.; W. 18 in.

<sup>4</sup>Panel: H. 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.; W. 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.



ST. PETER AND SIMON MAGUS  
AND  
THE CONVERSION OF SAINT PAUL  
BY BENOZZO GOZZOLI

ler.<sup>1</sup> Totila was a king of the Goths who invaded and plundered Italy after Belisarius was called to Constantinople. He had heard wonderful things of the sanctity of Saint Benedict, and wishing to prove the saint, he sent word that he would pay him a visit. Instead of going in person, he dressed one of his attendants in his royal robes and sent him with a numerous train to the monastery. But Benedict when he saw him coming cried out, "Put off, my son, put off those robes you wear which belong not to you." The mock king, struck with panic, fell at the feet of the saint, who raised him up and sent him back to his master. Totila then went himself into Saint Benedict's presence, but he too felt the power of the holy man and threw himself on his knees, while the saint reproved him for his wicked ways and foretold the facts of his future career and the time of his death, all of which came to pass.

In the picture, Saint Benedict, surrounded by monks of his order, is seated outside a porch of the monastery. Before him kneels Totila as he receives the saint's admonishments. The retinue of the king stand back of him, astonished at his unexpected contrition. A little pink church is shown in the center of the panel.

The accession of these works is a fortunate event. Benozzo's genius found its most delightful expression in narrative pictures, his madonnas and formal altarpieces being after all somewhat cold and uninspiring. As a story-teller he is supreme, and his series of the Procession of the Kings in the Medici oratory, the life of Saint Augustine in San Gimignano, and the Old Testament stories in Pisa stand apart on this account even in the great accomplishment of the far greater artists of his epoch. Though not comparable to the famous frescoes, our panels hold an eminent place among his smaller paintings, due to their finished execution and careful composition. In them, also, are manifest the distinguishing excellences of his art: his gaiety and freshness of observation, his

fairy color, and above all the playful and childlike point of view which makes him one of the best-loved artists of the Renaissance. B. B.

## THE EGYPTIAN EXPEDITION 1914-15

### I. THE WORK OF THE ROBB DE PEYSTER TYTUS MEMORIAL FUND

IN ordinary times work for the recording section of the Museum's Expedition in Egypt can scarcely attain to history, as its regular task is to copy for the Museum archives and for publication tombs standing open to the public, the records of which, in consequence, have as a rule been to some extent, though generally very inadequately, examined and even published. The past year, however, has not been like other years, partly because the effects of the great war have penetrated even into the hypogea of Thebes, and partly because, owing to the fund generously given by Mrs. Edward J. Tytus<sup>2</sup>, this branch of our work has now been enlarged and has entered on a new, and, it may be hoped, an increasingly fruitful phase. Thus, the one event has been able by a most happy coincidence to redress the falling balance due to the other; and as I, the member of the Expedition chiefly responsible for this side of the work, was ineligible for military service in England, I was able to proceed to Egypt in the autumn of last year after a short delay and to commence work at Thebes on November 15th.

I was accompanied by Mr. H. R. Hopgood, a young artist fresh from the schools who, by assiduous work and by the facility with which he adjusted himself to a task full of unfamiliar and tricky demands, materially contributed to the full results of the campaign. But for his assistance it would have been difficult indeed to carry through so successfully the plans which had been laid down for the work. For one thing, the requirements of the Expedition's work on other sides left me to deal single-

<sup>1</sup>Butler's *Lives of the Saints*, London, 1815, vol. III, p. 238.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. M.M.A. BULLETIN for October, 1914.